Radical Grace and the Economy

Module IX. Denial of Entitlement

This is *Section IX* of the broader workbook called
Radical Grace and the Economy

This is a PDF file. It can be downloaded in the usual manner, using File|Save or |Save.

Here's the first of 7 issues we'll discuss in this section:

Appropriation at All Levels

Disentitlement and colonialism.

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Issues

- *Everyone is Entitled*
  - ✓ Everyone is entitled to a place to call home, a community to call family, a role in which to live one's calling with dignity, the means to rise to life's challenges, and a path to the spirit which gives us life.
- *Colonial Appropriation*
  - ✓ But in the culture we have inherited, only commodities matter and power rules. The world economy colonizes so many of us at all levels — appropriating the land of nature's children, cancelling communities and cultures, imposing roles and identities, and corrupting the spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. **The only kind of entitlement that exists in a market economy** comes from property ownership. Isn't that enough? Why should anyone be guaranteed a home when land is freely available in the marketplace?
2. **How can anyone take away** someone else's community? Or their lifestyle? Or their religion?

The Big Land Grab

The doctrine of discovery strikes again.

Issues

- *It Warn't Theirs*
  - ✓ The concept of a colony was drawn from the supposition that uncivilized people in the new territories were inferior people, incapable of using their land and resources properly — and were therefore not fully entitled to ownership.
- *Learning Too Late*
  - ✓ And the fact that these uncivilized people were not initially familiar with foreign concepts of property entitlement allowed the invaders to think that nothing significant was being taken from them. Indigenous tribes did have the concept of treaty though, and soon realized there was a land grab going on.
- *Uphill Struggle*
  - ✓ But they were at a disadvantage in negotiations — facing superior weapons, unscrupulous tactics and their unfamiliarity with legal technicalities. Treaties took shape, which often took the form of swindles.

Discussion Questions

1. **What entitlement did indigenous people have** to their traditional lands if they had no deeds of ownership? What entitlement did the colonizers have?
2. **Why would a "superior civilization" think** that they're free to take the land by decree, or by force, or by swindle? What justifications did they use?

It's Not Just About Land

Issues

Grabbing everything but the kitchen sink.

- *Not Just Land Theft*
  - ✓ Colonialism is not limited to land and resources. It involves any instance where one group of people wants another group of people displaced and made to conform — because the invading group wants to take over their space and discredit their way of life. Here we identify three types:

- *Appropriating Community Space*
  - ✓ Invading cultures do not accept as legitimate those ways of social organization they deem inappropriate — and strive to displace it with "civilized" culture.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why did settlers think they had the right** to disentitle indigenous culture? Did they see how rapacious they were being, or did they feel they were just offering something better out of a sense of mission? Were indigenous communities that threatening?

- *Appropriating Personal Space*
  - ✓ The dominant society dictates acceptable roles and behaviours, allowable types of relationships, and approved personal identities on people whose own ways of life have served them well.

Discussion Questions

1. **Which other alternative ways of living** in 21st century domestic colonialism face pressure to conform or be disentitled? What forms does this cancel culture take?
2. **How are suppression** of the LGBT community, and patriarchy, forms of colonialism?

- *Appropriating Spiritual Space*
  - ✓ Arbiters of the spirit want to confine worship into narrow ways and approved practices, leaving no space for individuals and communities to follow their own path to the Holy Spirit. The modern church needs decolonization as much as any other institution.

Discussion Questions

1. **Is spiritual colonialism over and done with**, or are those hungry for the spirit still channeled into prescribed forms of worship?

The Franciscan Mission

Standing up for the disentitled and restoring holy gifts.

Issues

- *Stand Up and Serve*
  - ✓ The Franciscan impulse is to stand up for the disentitled and stand up to any unjust appropriating that marginalizes them. But not until first serving their needs.
- *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*
  - ✓ Franciscans recognize that all contested spaces are gifts of the Holy Spirit, and no one has the right to deny them to anybody.
- *Nothing Colonial*
  - ✓ Nothing colonial, nothing that is appropriation, belongs in God's kingdom where grace and gratuitous relations are the norm. And where such abominations are found, they are to be challenged.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can Franciscans say that everyone is entitled** to a home, a community and dignity when these are all gifts from God? How can they be taken away or given back?

Taking It All

Living the Creator's way.

Issues

- *Appropriating Creator's Land*
  - ✓ When settlers arrived, indigenous people encountered invaders laying individual claim to land that belonged to the Creator — an alien concept. *To the intruders*, the land not only didn't belong to the Creator, but neither did it belong to those who had stewarded it for generations. It was there for the taking, or the swindling.
- *Denigrating Creator's Children*
  - ✓ But colonial appropriation did not end with the land. Indigenous communities were dismissed as primitive and they were expected to emulate the culture of the invaders. Their own relationships and culture were vilified and suppressed. Their spiritual sensibilities were dismissed as pagan.
- *Bullying Ways*
  - ✓ Few knew colonial bullying like the indigenous peoples. But they still hang onto their values of inclusiveness today.

Discussion Questions

1. **Who does the land really belong to?** To the Creator alone? To the people who have lived on it and nurtured it for millennia? Or to private individuals?
2. **What is the rationale for private ownership?** Why is that so sacred to some? How alien is that to indigenous peoples?
3. **Why were indigenous people also pushed** to give up their culture and their communities? In modern times, have we all given up our culture and our communities to commercial colonization?
4. **Why do some indigenous communities** go by the slogan — "We are still here!"?

Colonialism Today

Colonialism goes wholesale.

Issues

- *Exclusion of Land*
  - ✓ Colonial values of exclusion remain strong in modern culture. Land is reduced to a commodity and land developers routinely push aside community aspirations in pursuit of private gain.
- *Ways of Life*
  - ✓ While claiming to strive for inclusiveness, mainstream culture disapproves of certain ways of living and discriminates against them, leaving people vulnerable to abuses of power and position. Vast swaths of people are denied the necessities of life if they don't possess the abilities or the values or the mental health to join the grasping commercial merry-go-round.
- *Approved Channels*
  - ✓ While claiming to be free thinkers, mainstream spirituality (or lack thereof) channels believers into standard templates of worship, relegating more innovative thinkers to the margins if not out the door.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why have the descendants of settlers yielded to colonial values** while indigenous people have hung on to their traditional ways?
2. **Why are colonial aberrations like patriarchy so firmly implanted** in the mainstream psyche while they have failed to take such strong root in indigenous culture?
3. **What kinds of alternative lifestyles are suppressed** in modern times? Why are so many people denied homes and other necessities of life?

The Call to Decolonize

Taking us beyond the mindset.

Issues

- *A Discredited Mindset*
  - ✓ How do we challenge an ingrained mind-set that is centuries old? Well, there are certain forms of exclusion that have lost their appeal. The original form of colonialism, the appropriation of land, has a bad reputation in modern times largely due to historical excesses. Currently the idea of condemning people for their lifestyles is coming under fire as challenges mount.
- *A Social Movement*
  - ✓ A social movement toward inclusive culture is gaining some critical mass, though regressive social movements are also growing. A smooth transition to greater tolerance is not guaranteed, and confrontation threatens.
- *A Peaceful Call*
  - ✓ The call must be for peaceful growth of enlightened behaviour, of inclusive standards, at every level where modern forms of the colonial mentality still persist — and issuing more serious challenges where needed. Combine that with the Franciscan tradition of serving the marginalized and the indigenous tradition of living as family in community, and the culture of appropriation may have to back off.

Discussion Questions

1. **Is the old colonialism dead?** What is the new colonialism and what forms does it take? Are we making progress in counteracting its modern forms?
2. **What kinds of pushback do we face** when we fight for inclusion? How do we encourage more enlightened behaviour? Will we have to fight fire with fire?
3. **How can Franciscans and Indigenous peoples** be leaders in this quest?

This is Module IX. Denial of Entitlement

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